

A Fresh View

by EpicPwner333

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Summary: When Hiccup tries to shoot down a Night Fury, a Monstrous Nightmare shows up, ruins his aim, and almost kills him. The weakest, puniest teen in the village, one Birla Skallagrinnsson happens to save his life. With a mutual interest in taking down dragons by mechanical means and similar situations, they become fast friends. What could go wrong? *title, summary will change* HiccupxOC

1. A Different Series of Events

****Hello readers! If you've seen me in the Minecraft fanfiction archive with my new story, The Tale of Drake, then you must be wondering why the heck am I trying to write two stories at once. Check my history of finishing stories, and you'll flinch.****

****Anyways, I love HiccupxOC stories. No idea why, but I swear I've read every one on the site. And now, I shall contribute my share! So wish me luck, and have a great time reading! Nothing makes me happier than people telling me that my writing is enjoyable. Oh, and review. Review review review. Reviewing makes me feel guilty that I'm procrastinating, and makes me write. So do it for our mutual benefit. I have done a crapload of research into Viking culture and family structure/names, so see if makes sense please. ****

****Disclaimer: I don't own HTTYD. In case you didn't know that already. Dreamworks, don't sue me please. I can dream, can't I though? :P
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Chaos was in the air in Berk that night. Battle cries and the clanging of metal filled the air in one massive roar. One that young Birla Skallagrinnsson was used to. Tonight, yet another raid by dragons was occurring, and the small girl was as alert as anyone.

Birla Skall, as most people shortened her family's last name, was a tiny thirteen year old girl who lived in the Western Tower. For as long as anyone could remember, as long as Berk had existed, her family had manned the catapult on the tower, and called it home as well. Birla was a sixth generation Skall, and had two siblings, her older sister Finna and younger brother Ulfr. Their parents, Bera and Egill were upstairs loading and firing off their catapult at the swarm of dragons over the main section of Berk. By tradition, the Skalls were always strong, burly, stereotypical Vikings. Also by tradition, the family had only two children to carry on the family name. Obviously, that had changed, and all because of Birla. The first child of Bera and Egill Skall, Finna, had perfectly lived up to the family name. Now at sixteen years old, she had no interest in Dragon Training or anything like that. She was big and bulky, and perfect for her current role: Hauling large rocks up the staircase and to the roof of the tower to the catapult, where her parents aimed and fire them from the war machine.

Birla's job was fitting to her attributes; she stood halfway between the catapult tower and the main village of Berk, and listened for orders from Stoic The Vast as to where they should be concentrating their fire, and which areas needed help from the flying stones hurled from the tower. When the orders came, Birla would sprint back to her home and pass the word. Since her voice was as tiny as her body, Birla's shouts to the top of the tower from the ground were easily drowned out by the roar of the ongoing battle. To fix these problem, Birla had rigged up a pulley system to convey slips of paper up to the roof from the doorway. It was the least she could do - the Skalls had tried everything else for her to do, but she had found a niche, uncomfortable but viable, as a messenger runner for the family.

Her younger brother, Ulfr Skall existed pretty much because of her. More specifically, he existed because of what she had become. A smart but weak and puny girl would never do as an operator for the catapult, as countless generations had done before her. Therefore, one more child was in order and Ulfr, despite being nine years old and four years younger than Birla, was already much stronger than the girl.

The Skall family was pitied for the shrimp of a daughter they had, but nobody really minded Birla. True, she was weaker than most toddlers in Berk, but she made up for that in honest enthusiasm with trying to help out whenever she could. It was expected that she would grow up to be a bread-baker or something, since she was a decent cook under her mom's loving instruction. For that matter, Birla's family was supportive of her. They understood her place in society, and left it that. Other than the occasional ribbing by Finna or Ulfr, Birla had a pretty good personal life.

Friends was what she lacked. The long-haired brunette was looked down upon by almost all of her peers. Not really bullied, more excluded. She didn't really know Hiccup, son of the village chief Stoic, but by the stories and occasional sightings she was glad he was in Berk if only to provide a better target for the biggest Berk teens. There were maybe fifty teens around Birla's age in Berk, but it was the bug, strong ones that were destined to dominate. More commonly known as the fire brigade. For whatever reasons, it was those children that were going into Dragon Training to be active warriors and shieldmaidens. Birla didn't really envy them like so many of her peers; she was well aware that Dragon Training would be about the

equivalent of a death sentence for her. So, friends were something she always wanted, but probably would never have. Even the bread-making kids and fishing teens avoided her. It was seen as bad form to be seen hanging out with Birla. Not worthy of being insulted and actively shunned, but Birla had long accepted people would never really look upon her as an equal.

Her life could be better, but it certainly could be worse. Birla knew the family business of shooting rocks at dragons from the top of the erstwhile house would be ably carried on by Finna and Ulfr, so she actually had the fairly unique position of being able to go about almost choosing what profession she would grow up to be. Now, that was something that didn't happen every day. Or year. Or generation, occasionally. Most Viking children belonged to families that knew exactly what they were going to be, and made no attempt to do otherwise. Just one thing bugged her constantly.

As Viking children were generally named, Finna and Ulfr both owed their names to great heroes of Berk's past. Birla[^] was different. She took her name from her mother, Bera, who's name meant Bear. That title was rather appropriate, as she was stronger and bigger than some of the men in Berk, coming from a lifetime of hauling rocks around and winding back the arm of a catapult. The name Birla was a derivative of Bera, and meant Little Bear. Yeah, she wasn't exactly proud of it, but at least her parents had enough sense to not name her something really stupid like "Fishlegs", or "Hiccup". Birla really had no idea where those names came from.

As Birla nudged the door open just enough to slip through [^] thankfully, very little as she could barely move the door [^] she breathed in the familiar scent of burning wood. The Skall's tower/home was a major exception to the rule that every house in Berk was new. Rienforced over generations by successive layers of rock and mortar, the tower had taken a Night Fury hit once and emerged barely damaged. It was generally acknowledged that the Skall tower was the safest building in Berk.

Birla ran out towards the focal point of the fighting that night, the lower docks. She was forced to run around in the open most of the time so that Stoic's subordinates could yell to her where her family should shoot. She'd never actually had Stoic directly talk to her, and nor did she want him to. The red-bearded giant terrified her. A few seconds after running into the town center of Berk, Spitelout spotted her and motioned her over.

"Listen lass, Stoic wants all catapults to concentrate their fire over the lower docks, got it?" he ordered without preamble, roaring at the top his lungs in an effort to be heard over the noise around them.

Birla just nodded, not even trying to speak. It would be futile, and Spitelout just grinned at her before raising his sword and charging at the nearest dragon, yelling a ferocious war-cry.

She sprinted back over the rough dirt road to her house. Just then, a whistling sound was heard a split-second before an already burning and abandoned catapult tower in the middle of the village exploded in a brutal flash of ghostly, fleeting blue flame.

"Night Fury!" an anonymous Viking screamed, as if everyone didn't

know.

"Get down!" another man yelled, but everyone was already following the advice prescribed in the Dragon Manual and were diving for the nearest cover.

Birla just kept running. The destroyed tower was located like in the opposite side of the village, and she was nearly home. A second later, yet another tower exploded and burst apart, showering practically the entire village in burning debris. Birla was still running when she noticed a figure pushing what appeared to be thin handcart towards her. When the figure didn't slow down or go around her, Birla guessed he or she had failed to notice her figure running in the shadows of various houses. Not hard to do, really. Birla dove out of the way at the last second, and for a moment she saw the face of the person lock eye contact with her; messily-cut red hair, emerald green eyes, a skinny, scrawny figureâ€¦

Hiccup Horrendous Haddock III. Well, then, that was a surprise. He was the town reject, and it was rumored he messed up and/or destroyed everything he touched. Birla didn't exactly believe the stories, but she hadn't really had a chance to say anything anyways, as she watched his rapidly receding form running away. She picked herself up off the ground, dusted her rough shirt off, and completed the trek to her house. If anyone her age in Berk was nearly as weak and small as her, it had to be Hiccup, she thought whimsically.

She pulled out a piece of paper from her pocket, and quickly wrote down what Spitelout had said before dropping it in the pulley basket and yanking on the rope. Any normal Viking her age would have been able to pull the rope with their teeth, but Birla tugged at it as hard as she could and watched in quiet satisfaction as the message made its way up to her parents. A minute later, the catapult was rotated and fired at the lower docks, where the large rock narrowly missed a dive-bombing Deadly Nadder, causing the beast to veer off its path and miss grabbing a herd of fat sheep.

Birla paused a moment to catch her breath. Technically, she should be sprinting back to Berk Village to catch the next set of orders, but seeing the number dragons attacking the lower docks, she figured they'd be occupied for a long time. She casually leaned back against the doorway, taking in the sight of the battle. She loved little moments like this.

Noticing something out of the corner of her eye, she turned her head. A figure was standing on Fishgut Cliff, behind some sort of odd contraption, probably one of those "Bola Launchers" of his. Rolling her eyes, she realized that meant it was Hiccup from earlier. While he might not be Loki incarnate like some people believed, she knew firsthand what those machines of his could do.

She ducked behind a barrel that held what could have been some sort of cloth, and cautiously peered out. Well, it hadn't misfired yet. That was encouraging.

Birla flinched as a shadow streaked over her, heading out to sea, faster than she dreamed a dragon could travel. The dark shadow was still in sight. Hiccup must have noticed, as he swiveled the launcher around. Birla's eyes widened as she saw a massive silhouette stomp its way towards him from behind. A Monstrous Nightmare. Crap.

Hiccup finally noticed it at the last second, but not before he fired the launcher. Instantly, a spinning bola was hurled at a breathtaking speed, perfectly straight and true. It was breathtaking to behold. Why, even she, Birla Skall, weakest Viking to ever live could use one of those things! Unfortunately, Hiccup must have flinched right before he fired the launcher because the bola missed the rapidly receding shadow seemingly by an inch. Hiccup began to panic at the sight of the huge dragon, losing his initial excitement from the successful firing of the launcher. Incredibly, the dragon's first shot missed the unlucky teen as he ran . . . right down the road in front of her tower.

In a spur of the moment decision, Birla screamed as loud as she could to him, "In here! Now!"

Birla was shocked at the strength of her own voice. Usually, it was as quiet as a mouse. Perhaps more so. But Hiccup obviously at least noticed her voice if not her words, and angled for the door. Above her, Birla could hear her parents and siblings shouting as they noticed the Monstrous Nightmare barreling towards them out of nowhere.

Right then, something stereotypically Hiccup happened - he tripped. Simply fell down maybe twenty feet away from the tower. Birla, before she could fully comprehend what she was doing, ran out to help him up.

"Birla!" Finna called from above.

Hiccup was groaning and grasping at his ankle, which looked beaten-up by the fall. Birla was about to ask if he was ok, but a roar interrupted her. Both teenagers looked up to see the Monstrous Nightmare in their faces, green gas collecting at the back of its throat in preparation to burn them to a crisp. Before it could do so, or the teens could do anything besides widen their eyes in terror, a huge rock flew into the dragon and knocked it away. Birla could hear the cheers of her family in the tower behind them, and she made a mental note to put some serious time into the post-battle meal that night. Before the dragon could recover, none other than Stoic the Vast leapt out and smashed the dragon's head with his trusty battle hammer, sending it reeling into an unoccupied shed. A few other Vikings ran over and secured the Monstrous Nightmare in a tangle of nets.

"That's it!" Stoic yelled, encouraging his men, "This one's for the champion of Dragon Training!"

A voice interrupted her silent celebration at her small role in the capture of the mighty beast. "Who are you?" Hiccup asked.

She glanced at him. "Birla Skallagrinnsson. Heard of me?" she asked sarcastically, back to her normal, mousy, voice.

"I'm sure you've heard of me." Hiccup said, rolling his eyes.

"Yeah, who hasn't?"

****Meh, awkward ending, but whatever. Please review and tell me what you think, remember that each review is the equivalent of you walking**

into my house and kicking me in the butt. In short, it gets me back to work. It helps throw my concentration back to the writing. Between balancing this story and The Tale of Drake... this could get interesting.**

Anyways, R&R, and have a great day!

Tally-ho!

2. Common Understandings

Haha, thought this was dead, didn't you? Nope! Just being pathetically slow in the making! Next few chapters will have more action, teens, OCs, and Dragon Training! Trust me, you'll see me drawing numerous parallels to the movie here, but everything will be different in some way, huge or insignificant. For example, I might use a line from the movie that Hiccup says, but in here Birla might say it to emphasize the similarities between Birla and Hiccup. Please stay with me here!

Disclaimer: Regrettably, I don't own the How To Train Your Dragon franchise. Boy do I wish I did, though.

Hiccup was a little bewildered by the previous events of the past, oh, minute to say the least. Escaping Gobber's forge with his Bola Launcher, making all the way to Fishgut Cliff without anyone stopping him, and drawing a perfect bead on what must have been a Night Fury. Hiccup really had felt as if the fates were with him that night. Then, that Monstrous Nightmare had shown up, ruined his aim by what seemed to be a fraction of an inch, and nearly burnt him to a crisp. If it weren't for the timely intervention of this girl Birla, a catapult, and finally Stoick, he'd probably be dead.

Ah well. Failure was preferable to death. And for once, he hadn't actually destroyed something. Instead, he indirectly had caused that mighty Monstrous Nightmare to be captured! Well, wasn't that something! He grinned broadly as his father came over.

"Hey, dad." he mumbled, still wary of his father since, after all, he had snuck out.

"Hello Hiccup. I see you made good bait for those dragons-I gotta thank you!" he said jokingly. That alone was enough to make the entire night's misadventures worth it. To have his father joke to him... to be fair, he must be in a good mood. Dragon attack repelled with minimum damage, livestock protected, and they had captured a Monstrous Nightmare. Actually, in one of their rare conversations Stoic had revealed he was worried about capturing a Monstrous Nightmare in time for Dragon Training. In his own words, it wouldn't do to have the champion have to slay any lesser of a beast than the biggest, most destructive of dragons. Save the Night Fury, of course, but they would never capture on of those.

"Greetings, lass!" Stoic cheerily said to Birla, who's eyes widened at being spoken to by the chief of her village.

"Yeah, uh, dad, Birla here, well, saved my life. I think." Hiccup explained, awkwardly rising to his feet.

"Aha, your the daughter of Egill and Bera?" Stoick asked.

"Er, yes." Birla replied, nearly too quiet to be heard.

"Well then, that fixes a problem of ours. Hiccup... our roof got blown off by a dragon earlier, so I'll be sleeping in Spitelout's house tonight. I thought you might have to bed down in Gobber's forge, but I want you to stay with the Skulls here." Stoick said.

Hiccup started to shake his head to say to stay with anyone was a very bad idea for him, but Egill Skull walked up, and upon hearing what Stoic had said, grinned.

"We'd be honored to have your son over!" he smiled. Turning to Birla, he hugged her tightly, saying "I'm so glad you didn't get hurt!"

Surprised at their genuine warmth to him, Hiccup could only nod, smile, and mumble thanks as he walked with the Skull family to their house. He supposed that they didn't know him like most of the village did. He just knew there'd be jeering afterwards from the other teens in the village, probably all revolving around him being good for nothing but dragon bait. Might as well enjoy this time of safety.

For her part, Birla was surprised at Hiccup's shyness to her. She was leading him to her house, since her family was going to the Mead Hall for a traditional Viking post-battle celebration. She never liked mead - for a girl of her stature, a small sip could prove sufficient to make her woozy and drunken, not something she wanted to do. On the other hand, Finna could already chug down alcohol like water. Back to the point, nobody besides her family had ever treated her as an equal, or a greater like Hiccup was. He looked self-conscious and shy, silent but following her every move. Jeez, he was actually the son of Stoic the Vast, pretty much the best Viking around?

For his part, Hiccup indeed was quite self-conscious at the moment. They entered the tower, and Birla motioned Hiccup to sit down at the family dinner table. Hiccup did so, and Birla quickly skirted out of the room to the kitchen.

Finally, Birla re-entered the dining room, carrying a small bowl of soup in each hand. She placed one down in front of Hiccup, who watched her without a word. She then sat down on the table's bench right next to him.

Hiccup gave her a look. "You're sitting next to me?" he asked in a slightly incredulous tone of voice.

"Yes." she replied, looking away. "We never have much room at the table, and they'll be coming back soon."

After that brief exchange, nothing was said as both attacked their small bowls of soup with gusto. An awkward silence proliferated in the dark room as they ate in silence. Finally, Hiccup spoke up.

"This is really good soup." he commented. That was definitely true, after all. Much better than anything he had managed to cook up at his

house when Stoic was away.

"Thanks." she responded.

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*"So, um, are a Skall?" Hiccup asked, nervously fidgeting.

"Yeah."

"You seem . . . a little . . . little for a Skall. I thought you guys were, y'know, bigger than me." Hiccup said, trying to find the right words.

"Hey!" Birla exclaimed in mock indignation, puffing up her chest. "Who's calling who little!?"

"Right. I can imagine my throat split open at the laughter directed at that statement." Hiccup replied, rolling his eyes at the girl.

"Whatever. Yes, I am a Skallagrinnsson." she said. A second later, she continued, "And you must be a Haddock?"

"In spite of appearances, I am a brave, strong, and thoroughly viking-like son of Stoick the Vast, and soon-to-be best Viking there is!" he said dramatically, flexing his non-existent biceps.

Birla laughed, shaking her head. "Sorry, didn't get that."

Hiccup leaped up and slashed an invisible sword at an invisible dragon, his face set in determination at the task. Birla laughed even harder at the spectacle, doubling over in her seat, and grasping the edge of the table to keep from falling over.

Hiccup stopped and raised an eyebrow. "What's so funny?" he asked, voice completely serious.

Birla finally got control of herself, and wiped a tear from her eye as she sat up. "I-I don't know . . . everything!" she said as she gestured wildly with her arms. "Everything about you!"

Huffing in mock defeat, Hiccup crossed his arms and rolled his eyes yet again, frowning. "Thank you for summing that up." he muttered.

"Oh, not that way. I mean, you're just . . . different!" Birla said, dramatically waving her hands out in front of her.

"Like, I'm nothing like everyone else?" Hiccup said.

"I wouldn't say everyone." Birla said immediately, look up sharply.

"Hey, at least you don't have the Dragon Trainees mocking you at every step."

"Well, that's because I'm nobody! They wouldn't know who I was if their lives depended on it!"

"My dad knew who you were . . ."

"All he knew was that I was the daughter of Egill and Bera."

Hiccup turned away. "At least your family likes you." he said slowly and sadly. Birla was surprised at his sudden change in mood. So far, he'd been kinda sarcastic but not entirely serious. Not so now.

"Huh?" Birla said in confusion. "I thought your dad was happy that you helped capture that Monstrous Nightmare."

"Yeah, for once in my life. He's happy even though I nearly got roasted by a dragon. Your dad hugged you and said he was glad you were safe."

Birla gave him a funny look, and said back, "Hey, let's not get into how our lives suck, okay?"

"Fine." Hiccup conceded, still in a rather dark mood.

Birla looked around, trying to find a way to change the subject. As she looked out the window at Fishgut cliff, it came to her in a flash.

"What was that thing you had?" she asked, genuinely excited.

"Oh, the bola launcher? Just a little machine of mine . . . it's nothing really. It failed." Hiccup said, still unhappy.

"No, it was awesome! Even I coulda fired that thing!" Birla exclaimed, leaping out of her seat.

"Really? I missed." Hiccup said, looking up.

"Of course! You woulda hit that Night Fury if that Monstrous Nightmare had shown up a second later. How did you even make that thing?" she said, eyes sparkling.

"Well, you can see!" Hiccup said, finally brightening at Birla's infectious enthusiasm.

Birla quickly set out bowls of soup for her returning family, and raced out the door after Hiccup. Together, they sprinted up the path to Fishgut Cliff where Hiccup's abandoned bola launcher sat, slightly damaged by the Monstrous Nightmare's blast of fire. Birla looked over the machine excitedly, surprising Hiccup. Typically, when Vikings noticed his machines, they wrote them (and him as well) as "un-Vikinglike" and that was that. Birla actually seemed to be interested in it.

"You . . . you made this?" she asked in an incredulous tone of voice, running her hand along a firing grip.

"Well, is there anyone else on Berk that would be even remotely interested in something like this?" he shot back.

"Me!" Birla exclaimed, looking up, her eyes sparkling, saying "Why, even I, Birla Skall, the weakest Viking in all of Berk, could use this thing and take down a dragon!" Continuing, she gestured at her small self. "I mean, look at me! I can't swing a hammer, I can't lift an axe," pausing for a second, she grabbed a spare bola attached

to the side of the machine, "I can't even throw one of these!" she said as Hiccup noticed how hard it was for her to lift up the twin iron spheres.

"But this . . ." Hiccup started to say.

"Could throw them for me. Exactly!" Birla said. "Oh, this fixes everything!"

Hiccup gave her a look. "Every what?"

"I'm a Skall, you know what they do, right?" Birla asked.

"They man the catapult on the Western Tower." Hiccup responded.

"Exactly. I can't use a catapult! Look at me, I can't even roll rocks up the ramps to the throwing arm. All I do is run messages to my family." Birla said.

"Well, that's a better job than I have." Hiccup frowned.

"You're the village blacksmith, right? Or the apprentice, at least."

"Yup. Absolutely _lovely _feeling when you're stuck inside a sweltering forge with Gobber watching your peers get to put out fires." Hiccup said with feigned excitement.

Birla laughed again. "Hey, you don't have your family poke fun at you for failing the family tradition."

Hiccup darkened. "You don't have your family practically disown you for failing the family tradition."

Birla grabbed Hiccup's shoulder and tugged on it, trying to get him back to the tower. "Come on! I want to show you my message-carrying system!"

Hiccup looked at her, temporarily forgetting the mentioning of his strained family relationship. "Wait, what?"

"I rigged up a bunch of pulleys to carry messages to the roof of the tower."

"Let me get this straight," Hiccup said, giving her a disbelieving scowl, "you invented something to save you from physical work?"

Birla stuck her tongue out at him. "Look who's talking, Mr. I-need-a-machine-to-throw-bolas-for-me!"

Hiccup backed away from the energetic brunette, waving his arms. "No, no, no! That's really awesome!"

Birla smirked, crossing her arms. "Anyways, look at me. I'm probably the only person on Berk that can't pull you to wherever I want you to go."

"Now you've got me curious . . ." Hiccup smiled as he started pushing

his bola launcher towards the still-abandoned Western Tower.

"Now that's the spirit!" Birla cried as she raced after him.

Hiccup couldn't believe his luck. For once in his life, he had had an intelligent conversation with one of his peers. On top of that, the girl he had talked to actually had the same interests as him! Witty, humorous, able to take his instinctual sarcasm with a grain of salt unlike everyone else on Berk . . . brave. She hadn't even seemed to really notice his lack of manly-Vikingness! Also, it helped that she was practically the only person on Berk weaker than him. The rest of the Skulls seemed pretty nice, too. Despite barely missing that Night Fury, Hiccup felt better this night than he ever had in recent memory. He felt so . . . fulfilled.

Birla couldn't believe her luck. For once in her life, she had met someone who didn't scoff at her size or (lack of) strength. He was mechanically minded, witty, kinda sarcastic, and actually understood her sense of humor! Plus, it helped that he was practically the second-weakest/non-Vikingest person in Berk. Her week was certainly looking a lot brighter at the prospect of having a . . . friend? Hiccup as a friend? The entire concept of friendship was still fairly alien to her, but if this was what friendship was like, laughing and joking and understanding, she certainly liked it.

Both teens thought at exactly the same time, Tonight has gone really well!, and both smiled at exactly the same time to themselves.

****So there you have it! Chapter two of A Fresh View, filled with friendship-building! I do hope I wasn't horribly OOC with Hiccup, as if I was it was completely unintentional.****

****Have a nice day, and as always please review! Profuse thanks to Only If It's 4 U for his/her review!**
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****P.S. The Tale of Drake (my current minecraft fanfic) will be updated tomorrow, in the unlikely case that you're following me across franchises.****

3. Problems and Solutions

****A/N Back again! Notice that I take turns now, updating A Fresh View and The Tale of Drake (my other current fanfic). If one gets updated, that means I'm working on the other for sure. Now, watch in fascination as my story takes an unexpected twist! (maybe? did YOU see this coming?) I'm just going to say right here, that this story will follow the movie in theory, even if major things are added/removed. 'Cause the movie's awesome. Still, I'm not going to directly follow it, since who wants to read another HTTYD novelization? No offense to those writers, just sayin that they've got that topic pretty well covered.****

****Also, to answer one of my reviews: Yes, our favorite puppy dog . . . nope, deadly night-black dragon, Toothlessm WILL appear in the story. Just not now. There is an example of in what ways this story will deviate from the movie.****

****Disclaimer:****

****I do not own HTTYD. ****

That night, things had only gotten better for both Hiccup and Birla. As it turned out, Birla's entire family had gotten drunk at the Mead Hall and had spent the entire night there, not by choice of course. They kind of passed out.

Birla had spent an hour going over every system, part, and calculation that was part of her pulley machine and Hiccup had listened intently to every word. He had even gotten a few new ideas from her. It was slightly jarring for him to meet someone else who had a similar view on all things Viking as him. It was equally jarring to even be _talking _to someone that treated him as an equal._
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It struck him that he'd never really had that sort of experience for a long time. Teasing from the Dragon Trainees, awkward, one-sided conversations with his father, random glares from other Vikings, human interaction was a rare commodity for Hiccup. As much as he had wanted to shoot down that darned Night Fury, Hiccup believed he had been given a much greater gift in meeting Birla.

Early in the morning, Hiccup and Birla stood outside the Western Tower, inspecting Hiccup's Bola Launcher. Birla had begged him to completely explain everything in the machine, and so he had. It had only taken him an hour . . .

Birla beamed at him. "I understand it now!" she exclaimed. Hiccup gave her a disbelieving look. "I think, at least." she hastily added a second later.

Hiccup crossed his arms. "Well then, let's see."

She nodded at him, and knelt down before the contraption. Brushing her hair back to get a better look, she began. "Ok, this crank winds up this rod that has the tension rope coiled around it. It uses a gear system so that someone like you can pull the throwing string back."

Hiccup raised an eyebrow at her. "And look who's talking . . ."

"No, no." Birla shook her head, "sorry if that came out wrong. Anyways, that little lever will snap up when there's enough tension coiled up. Then, you unsnap that clasp there to aim."

"And why is that?"

"If it could swivel freely when you cranked it up, then it would swing around all over the place and be really hard to wind up. Correct?" Birla said, smirking at him.

Hiccup shook his head. "Yes. Glad to see someone listened."

Birla allowed herself to give a self-satisfied smile before continuing. "Then you grab the two handles like so, and aim the bola launcher using the pop-up sights."

Hiccup nodded, and dramatically clapped his hands. "Bravo, bravo. Touched by your attentiveness."

Birla laughed. "So can I shoot it?" she asked.

Hiccup opened his mouth to speak, but at that moment Egill Skall opened the door of the Western Tower and called out to Hiccup's friend. "Birla" he yelled.

"What, dad?" Birla said back. Hiccup was jarred by Birla's sudden change in voice when speaking to her father. Now she sounded (and acted) like the first time he had met her - shy, and as quiet as a mouse. In fact, Hiccup doubted if Egill had even heard her.

Well, actually, that wasn't quite true. Birla had still been very quiet when speaking to Hiccup, but . . . it was the very way she spoke that changed, he supposed. When Birla was talking to Hiccup, after she had warmed up to him, of course, she had been outgoing, witty, and surprisingly energetic beneath that weak exterior. Her energy didn't make her speech any louder, per say, but it was obviously there.

"Come inside, Birla. Your mother and I have to discuss something with you." Egill continued. To be frank, he actually seemed rather troubled.

"Coming." Birla responded, still in her subdued personality. She turned to Hiccup, and instantly brightened. "This machine is really cool. You're really cool! You think . . . that I can see you sometime later today?" she asked, eyes sparkling. There she went again, Hiccup reflected. Back to her old self. Well, the self that Hiccup liked, anyways.

"Uh, sure. Of course." Hiccup stuttered. He looked over Birla's shoulder (not a very hard thing to do) and saw his father walking down the road. Stoick's face had that "time to talk" sort of look to it. "I guess I'll see you around!"

Birla flashed him a smile before running to her father.

"Hey dad." Hiccup said neutrally as his father approached.

"Hello son." Stoick replied. He motioned for Hiccup to follow him. "I have to speak with you about something."

Stoick turned away and started walking down the long, interconnecting ramps to the docks, Hiccup struggling to keep at his side. "Dad?" Hiccup asked.

"Yes. Son, our village has a problem, and you are part of the solution." Stoick answered, staring straight ahead, a distant, far away look in his eyes.

* * *

><p>FLASHBACK

* * *

><p>Stoick sat in the Mead Hall late the previous night, after the

raid. His initial reaction to the repulsed attack was one of satisfaction; only a few injured Vikings, almost no supplies stolen, most of the village intact. His son had even helped bait a Monstrous Nightmare to the Western Tower's catapult (he thought it had been intentional). Now, Spitelout was giving him some bad news that successfully tempered his mood.<p>

"Stoick, we have a problem." he had first said, walking up the the Chief of Berk.

"What?"

"Fishleg's father has alerted me to an . . . _unfortunate_ trend in past year. He's been compiling a bunch'a records, and apparently, with the current rate of Trainees and our annual losses, soon we won't even be able to send out boats to find the nest. Sir, we're running out of men."

"Aren't this year's Dragon Trainees starting in a few days?"

"Yeah, all five of 'em. Not enough, supposedly."

"Thanks for the heads up."

Spitelout nodded, and walked away. Stoick frowned at the new information. A minute later, Gobber ambled over, mug in hand.

Without preamble, Gobber spoke. "Spit it out." he commanded.

"What?" Stoick asked, confused.

"Ye got' that look on yer face, Stoick, Somethings botherin' ya." Gobber clarified.

"I was just told that Berk is running out of warriors." Stoick said flatly, grimacing.

"Aye, it's a damn shame." Gobber responded indifferently.

Stoick gave him a look. "That's all ye got? Those beasts are winning!"

"Simple. Make more teens Dragon Trainees." Gobber said, taking a swig from his mug.

"But who?" Stoick asked.

Gobber gestured wildly, saying "Everyone, Stoick! Let all other Vikings pick up teh' slack. Ye said we need more warriors, ye get more warriors."

"Who's going to grow up to make our bread, catch our fish, bake our bread?"

"It only has teh' be _temporary_. Get a bunch o' warriors, find the nest, destroy it, and we're good. What's worse, havin' a shortage of bread in the future, or havin' a shortage of warriors now, when we need 'em most?"

"And you're sure about this?"

"Yup. Take it from me, those kids want to be teh' Dragon Trainees. Who wants teh' be a dumb ol' fisherman when ye can be a big, strong warrior?"

Stoick sighed, and conceded. "Fine. But most of those kids are no warriors."

"Ha! And ye're sayin' that Fishlegs an' Snotlout are? Can't be much worse."

"Got a point. Get the word out."

* * *

><p>"I'm puttin' ye in Dragon Training, Hiccup." Stoick said finally.<p>

"What? Dad, are you kidding me? All my life you've said I'll never go there and the day before it starts you say yes!?" Hiccup exclaimed.

"Ye won't be alone." Stoick said, closing his eyes.

"Huh?"

Stoick stopped and turned to Hiccup, bending down to his level. "Hiccup, Berk is running out of warriors. We need everyone."

"What?"

"Any parent who wishes to have their fourteen year-old put in Dragon Training this year may do so. We're desperate, son." Stoick said.

"But . . . but these are fishermen! Sheep shephards! Bakers! Carpenters! Are you actually putting them in a cage with live dragons!?"

"Yes, I am." Stoick stated flatly. "And you're joining them."

"But . . ."

"Don't worry, you're new friend . . . Birla, is it?" Hiccup nodded, "her parents jumped at the opportunity."

"Birla?" Hiccup gasped in disbelief. "She'll get crushed!"

"Then help her, Hiccup. I'm not expecting you to agree with my decision, but you must carry on the tradition of the Haddock's." Stoick said slowly, for emphasis. A second later, he added, "Here. This will help ye," handing Hiccup a small axe he had produced from his belt.

He began to walk away, but then turned back to Hiccup, a few feet away. "Make your ancestors proud. Make me proud, son. I'm leaving tomorrow for a nest hunt. I'll be back . . . maybe."

"And I'll be here . . . probably."

* * *

><p>Later that day after helping clean up the forge a bit with Gobber, Hiccup took a walk into Town Square. Too late, he noticed Fishlegs, Ruffnut, Tuffnut, Snotlout, and Astrid, the original Dragon Trainees, standing in his path.<p>

Hiccup was surprised, to say the least, when they completely ignored him strolling by. Instead, he got to listen in on a snippet of their conversation.

"Can you believe we've got twenty other kids in Training now?" Ruffnut exclaimed.

"That means more people that we see get hurt!" Tuffnut sneered, and high-fived Snotlout.

"Actually, twenty-five more teenagers are joining us, Ruffnut." Fishlegs added. Ruffnut glared at him.

"I'm gonna crush every one of 'em!" Snotlout boasted.

"This just means more people to beat, guys. Come on." Astrid said, getting up. The rest of the "original five" followed at her heels.

Thanking Odin for his luck, Hiccup continued his walk. Everywhere, kids his age were excitedly swinging the weapons they would bring to Training tomorrow about, while others were talking in small groups, no doubt on how awesome it was that they were going to become warriors. Their parents looked just as happy.

Hiccup felt like the only unhappy person in the Square. That thought was dis-proven a second later as he ran into a diminutive brunette girl.

"Birla!" he exclaimed.

"Hiccup!" she said at the same exact moment. "Did you hear the news?" she added, a look of terror on her face.

"Yeah . . ." Hiccup said sadly, lifting up his axe to show her.

Birla nodded and showed him a little sword, more like a dagger that she was carrying. "Dragon Training." she said.

In unison, the two friends spoke. "We are so dead."

****Oh noes! This chapter opens several critical questions . .
.****

****Will the random teens from different professions not die on the first day of Dragon Training?****

****How in the world will Birla and Hiccup survive in an arena filled with thirty other people?****

****And most importantly . . . ****

****What can Gobber cook up for Training, since the Gronkle he usually uses for six people (six shots) will be swarmed? *evil grin****

****Find out next time on A Fresh View! (and please review, as always)****

4. First Day

****Ok, wow. I am SO SORRY for the wait. It's just a crappy week+ full of tests and different afterschool practices and . . . well, the worst of it's over now. My will will persevere. This story will survive.****

****Before I start, I want to say thank you, thank you, thank you to all my reviewers/favoriters/followers/viewers. Seriously, you guys are the only reason that this chapter is here. So thanks, and give yourself a richly-deserved pat on the back.****

****Also, if you liked my story of HiccupXOC, than try this example: The Other Hofferson, by Queen-of Typing. I'm a big fan.****

****One last note: between my primary Minecraft fanfic, The Tale of Drake, and this one, guess which has vastly more favorites and followers, despite being smaller? A Fresh View! Personally, it is my belief that the HTTYD fanbase here is much more active than any other I've ever written on, and all the support has been kind of overwhelming. So three cheers for the fandom!****

****And one last last note, remember Toothless is in zero of the story so far. It could prove important if Hiccup were to have no experiences with dragons that didn't end up with them trying to kill him immediately...so yeah.****

****And thanks.****

Standing together near the edge of the marketplace, Hiccup and Birla observed the teens laughing and running about. Anyone going to Dragon Training the next day had been given the day off chores and work to "practice" their skills at killing dragons. For the most part, they were bragging, joking, and sparring with their new weapons, not actually getting ready. Hiccup had gathered that much from just sitting there watching them.

"Lambs to slaughter." Birla whispered finally. "What was your dad thinking?"

Hiccup turned to his friend, grateful for the reason to break the (relative) silence. "We're running out of warriors."

Birla laughed, but it wasn't her normal, cheerful laugh. She sounded more like a condemned criminal. "I knew that, silly. My parents told me that much. You're his son, why would he do this?"

"I have no idea. I guess thirty half-trained dolts with sharp weapons are better than five trained Vikings when you're running out of men." Hiccup explained.

Birla gave him a dubious look. "That's all you've got?"

Hiccup raised his hands in defense. "Hey, you think I can read minds? His mind of all people's? I don't even know his favorite weapon anymore!"

"Hiccup, it's a hammer. Even I can tell that from . . . well . . . y'know, how he carries a war hammer during raids?" Birla said.

"Well, alright, maybe that was a little much, but still." Hiccup admitted. "Point is, I have no idea why he would do this."

"Great, just great!" Birla exclaimed. "I'm so gonna die."

Both fell silent after her outburst, listening to the bustle and commotion of the marketplace. Everywhere they looked, teens were exuberant at their new assignments.

"Those fools. They have no idea what they're going into." Birla breathed.

Hiccup looked at her, raising an eyebrow. "And you do?"

"Well, for one I'm not standing here grinning like a doll! This is war, Hiccup! Do they know how many people we've lost on nest hunts?" Birla said, eyes narrowing at the crowd in front of her.

Hiccup took a step back, raising his hands between him and the surprisingly angry Birla. "Woah, woah, calm down! And yes, I do know how many people we've lost on nest hunts. Every time Dad comes back from one he constantly mutters to me about everyone who didn't make it back. You're not alone."

"Ok." Birla sighed, visibly deflating. "Sorry, Hiccup."

"It's fine." Hiccup assured her. "Hey, at least we can die together." he commented, giving Birla a half-smile.

Birla smirked, back to her usual self. "Wonderful idea."

"I know, right? Fixes all our problems, doesn't it." Hiccup observed.

Birla frowned again. "Seriously though, we're dead."

"Yeah, we are." Hiccup sighed in agreement.

* * *

><p>The next day, Hiccup woke up early. His dad was still snoring in his room, and Hiccup was practiced at moving around his house without making too much noise. Natural clumsiness aside, he had pretty much memorized the location of every possible obstacle on the floor of his house for this very reason.<p>

He made it out the front door without a hitch. Quickly running along the road to Fishgut Cliff, he could hear lots of talking in houses he

passed. Far too much talking for this early in the morning. Hiccup could only assume that the new Dragon Trainees were already up and ready to go.

Making it to the edge of the cliff, he was aware of a distinct lack of a certain petite brunette. Birla was late.

Humming to himself, he sat down on a rock and looked out over the docks. This cliff had a wonderful view of them, and even at this time of day people were swarming the area. He did notice three of Berk's best warships missing, though. That would be his dad, searching for the nest. Apparently, he had heard, Stoick had convinced the necessary number of Vikings to come with him on the dangerous hunt by threatening them with the prospect of watching Hiccup. Wonderful for his self-esteem.

He paused to consider the day ahead. All of Hiccup's life, he'd wanted to go to Dragon Training. He'd begged with his dad to let him at least try to prove himself to him. And every time, dad had changed the subject or, recently, blatantly informed his son that it would never happen. Now, completely out of the blue, long after Hiccup had written off ever being in Dragon Training, his dad had informed him that his long-time dream was becoming a reality.

There was but one problem. His long-time dream was no longer really a dream. A few years ago, for sure, all he had wanted in this world was to follow in his family's footsteps, but now . . . as Hiccup had matured, so had his life's aims. That combined with Snotlout and the gang constantly reminding him of his inability to use normal weapons had convinced him that he had better just accept life as a non-Viking among Vikings.

In retrospect, it was kinda amusing, as Birla would put it. For most of his life all he had wanted was to go to Dragon Training, and now that he actually was going to . . . All he wanted was to _not_ go.

A voice snapped him out of those morose thoughts. "Hey!" Birla cried, directly behind him.

Startled, Hiccup spun around as he leapt off the rock he was sitting on. Or, at least, that was the action he had in mind. Unsurprisingly, he tripped over a root and fell flat on his face, just inches from the edge of Fishgut Cliff. He made a mental note not to get into deep thought that close to cliffs in the future.

"Agh . . ." he moaned, rubbing his head as he sat up. Birla rushed to his side, laughing.

"Wow, Hiccup, I'm sorry! I didn't expect _that_ to happen!" she exclaimed as she crouched down at his side.

"You really should know me by now." Hiccup observed as she gave her best try at helping him up. "What a way to start the day."

"Well, it looks like you started your day a little early, eh?" Birla said, wiping a tear from her eye.

"Yup. Ready for you-know-what?" Hiccup asked.

Birla's mood instantly darkened. It was like throwing a bucket-full

of water on to a fire. "Yeah. Woo-hoo, I can hardly wait to become a stain on the walls of the Kill Ring." she said to him.

"Neither can I." Hiccup deadpanned. "Come on, let's get to the town square. Everyone else is meeting there to go all together to Training."

"And do we want to go with those people?" Birla noted.

"Probably not."

* * *

><p>As it turned out, it might have been a better idea to not meet up with all the other kids after all. Birla had hoped to get to know some of the other Berk teens, but they had proved to be less tolerant than Hiccup.<p>

"Go away you little troll!" a big carpenter's apprentice jeered, earning the derisive laughs of a few of the people around him.

"Yeah, bug off ye dwarf." another of the bully's cronies sneered. Apparently, the original Dragon Trainees weren't the only bullies in the village.

"Those stupid little . . ." Birla choked out after they moved on to a new victim, nearly in tears. None of her peers, except Hiccup, had ever paid attention to her before, until now. Not really the way she wanted, though.

"Eh, don't let it get to you. Just keep thinking your smart and they're really dumb, and you'll get over it." Hiccup said to her. "That's what I always do."

Birla pushed back her tears and smiled at him. "Great advice." she said, sarcastically rolling her eyes. "Though, it is true."

They both had a little, private laugh over that.

Finally, Hiccup, Birla, and everyone else arrived at the Kill Ring. There, the other kids had stopped mocking their little group of two, as they were too busy gawking at the massive pit where they were to become warriors. The two teens could easily hear the cocky comments of the others.

"Welcome to Dragon Training!" Gobber yelled as the crowd of trainees marched into the grim, yet oddly awe-inspiring place.

"No turning back." Astrid muttered, half to to herself.

"That's encouraging . . ." Birla commented to Hiccup, earning a harsh glare from Astrid.

Everyone else was silent until Tuffnut spoke up. "I hope I get some serious burns." he boasted, mostly to his sister.

"I'm hoping for some mauling, like on my shoulder or lower back." Ruffnut agreed, gaping at the solid rock walls of the Ring.

Birla turned to Hiccup, this time whispering to avoid unwanted attention. "A burn on that guy's 'lower back' would translate to me getting charred to a crisp, you know."

Hiccup sighed. "Not encouraging either. What goes for you pretty much goes for me, too."

This time unaware of the teens' unenthusiastic observations, Astrid nodded at the twins' boasting. "Yeah, it's only fun if you get a scar out of it."

To this, even some of the other 'new kids' gave each other perturbed looks, Hiccup and Birla no exception. "I feel better already." Hiccup said, rolling his eyes.

"Yeah, no kidding, right? Pain. Love it." Birla shot back. Still, no one heard her over the increasingly-loud muddle of voices. Everyone looked on edge, tense, excited to shake off their old lives.

Gobber finally raised his hand to get the crowd to be silent, and most of them immediately complied, staring at him. Birla wondered if he got uncomfortable with so many people staring at him. She was disabused of that notion a second later.

"Let's get started!" he roared, catching the attention of any remaining errant kids. "The recruit who does best will win the honor of killing his first dragon in front of the entire village."

At that, everyone started to talk in low voices to each other, undoubtedly about their chances of being that star pupil. All except Hiccup and Birla, of course. They exchanged uneasy glances, fidgeting with their (comparatively) tiny weapons.

Gobber slowly went down the line of recruits, looking intently at each and every one. The reactions varied; some of the teens were confident and smiled at the trainer as he strolled past, while other nervously glanced around under his intense stare. He finally reached Hiccup and Birla, who were standing at the far end of the line, slightly apart from the rest.

"Ah, Hiccup!" he said cheerily. "Glad to see you made it!"

"Yeah . . . glad." Hiccup 'agreed', looking away at the menacing doors the dragons were behind.

Gobber noticed Birla standing there as well. "Ah! And who's your friend?" he asked . . . winking?

Flustered, Hiccup stammered to respond. "This is Birla Skallagrinsson." he quickly explained.

"Ah, don't look so down, lass." Gobber said to the diminutive brunette, who apparently considered that the floor was a very attractive thing to stare at.

"Huh?" she whispered, glancing up.

"Don't worry - you two are small and weak. That'll make you less of a target to 'em. They'll see you as sick or insane and go after all those more . . . Viking-like teens, instead."

"Words of encouragement were never said finer up till today . . ."
Birla said to Hiccup after Gobber had left, prompting him to chuckle.

Walking away from the line of mostly-eager recruits, Gobber reached the far wall. "Behind these doors are just a few of the many species you will learn to fight!" he shouted, going to the first door.

Hiccup noticed Fishlegs, who was at the opposite end of the line, looked unusually concentrated. Like, the about-to-burst-from-concentration look. He nudged Birla, and nodded in the large boy's direction. Birla joined Hiccup in wondering what Fishlegs was up to.

"The Deadly Nadder!" Gobber said, pointing at the appropriate door.

Fishlegs appeared to say something, and sure enough, a few people around him gave him a glance.

"The Hideous Zippleback!" Gobber said again. And again, people around Fishlegs looked at him. The boy himself seemed about to explode.

"The Monstrous Nightmare!" Same thing.

"The Terrible Terror!" Fishlegs said something, and now everyone near him was staring. Even Gobber noticed.

"Will you stop that!?" Gobber yelled. Whatever it was, it had gotten on the trainers nerves.

"And here we go." Hiccup muttered to his friend.

"And . . . the Gronkle!" Gobber said, then smirked. "Or should I say . . . Gronkle_s_."

"Wait, why more than one?" the, carpenter's apprentice from earlier asked, nervously gripping his sword.

"With such a big group, ya gotta work together. Groups of dragons do the same, so the only way to beat 'em is to mimic 'em, in this case." Gobber explained, reaching for the lever to the door.

"Wait, aren't you going to teach us first!?" Snotlout gasped in disbelief, and almost everyone nodded with him. Except Astrid, of course.

"I believe in learning . . . on the job." Gobber stated with a twinkle in his eye, and slammed the lever down.

****As always, review please!****

End
file.